

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6581  
INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 3 TEL AVIV 4093

BUCHAREST FOR VIETS

EO. 11652: N/A  
TAGS:ELAB, PINS, IS  
SUBJECT: HISTADRUT ELECTION MOVING INTO HIGH GEAR

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE FORMATION  
OF A NEW GOVERNMENT COALITION AND STRAINS IN U.S.-ISRAELI  
RELATIONS CONTINUE TO CROWD THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS OFF  
THE FRONT PAGES OF THE NEWSPAPERS, THE FULL DRAMA OF  
THAT ELECTORAL STRUGGLE IS NOT LOST ON THE ISRAELI  
PUBLIC. EVERYONE IS AWARE OF THE STAKES IN THIS ELECTION,  
I.E., THAT ON ITS OUTCOME MAY DEPEND THE SURVIVAL OF THE  
POLITICAL LABOR MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL AND ITS CHANCE TO POSE  
AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE NEW POLITICAL FORCES AND  
COALITIONS NOW CONSTITUTING THEMSELVES. IF THE LABOR  
ALIGNMENT SHOULD LOSE THIS ELECTION THERE IS WIDE EX-  
PECTATION THAT IT MAY SPLIT INTO SEVERAL GROUPS AND  
FACTIONS IN SEARCH OF NEW POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL  
ALLIANCES. A SUBSTANTIAL LIKUD SUCCESS IN THE  
HISTADRUT ELECTION, WHICH INVOLVES A POTENTIAL  
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ELECTORATE OF NEARLY 1.4 MILLION VOTERS, EVEN IF IT  
FALLS SHORT OF AN OUTRIGHT VICTORY, WOULD GREATLY  
STRENGTHEN LIKUD'S MANDATE TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY AND  
TO INTRODUCE MAJOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS LIKELY  
TO REDUCE FURTHER THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE  
ALIGNMENT. SUCH A RESULT WOULD PROBABLY ALSO BE  
ACCLAIMED AS A PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF LIKUD'S FOREIGN

POLICY. END SUMMARY

1. THE CAMPAIGN OPENS: THE PUBLICATION ON JUNE 1 OF ELEVEN (AS COMPARED TO 23 FOR THE KNESSET) PARTY LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE 1,501 DELEGATES TO THE HISTADRUT CONVENTION IN SEPTEMBER OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. THE PARTIES QUICKLY TRANSFORMED THEIR KNESSET ELECTION HEADQUARTERS INTO HISTADRUT ELECTION HEADQUARTERS AND INFORMATION TEAMS USUALLY HEADED BY PROMINENT POLITICAL AND LABOR LEADERS ARE STOMPING THE COUNTRY TO RALLY THE HISTADRUT ELECTORATE. BOTH THE ALIGNMENT AND THE LIKUD ARE POINTING UP THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WORKERS, THE ECONOMY, AND EVEN FOREIGN POLICY IF THE OTHER SIDE WINS.

2. THE ALIGNMENT CAMPAIGN: SO FAR THE ALIGNMENT EFFORTS ARE THE MOST CONSPICUOUS AND THE SHOCK OF THE ELECTORAL DEFEAT APPEARS TO HAVE HELPED MOBILIZE PARTY AND TRADE UNION VOLUNTEERS AS WELL AS KIBBUTZ MEMBERS TO HELP WITH THE CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BOTH THE PARTY AND HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP ARE STILL REELING FROM THE KNESSET ELECTION DEFEAT AND FIND IT DIFFICULT PROPERLY TO COORDINATE THE CAMPAIGN. MOREOVER, LABOR PARTY-HISTADRUT RIVALRY CONTINUES TO PLAGUE CAMPAIGN ARRANGEMENTS. THESE DIFFERENCES APPEAR TO BE FURTHER EXACERBATED BY A SERIOUS LACK OF FUNDS AS A RESULT OF THE LARGE DEBTS INCURRED BY THE LABOR PARTY STEMMING FROM ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTORAL DEFEAT LAST MONTH. WITH VOLUNTEER RESPONSES BETTER THAN EXPECTED, THERE IS A FEELING THAT THE TIDE AGAINST THE ALIGNMENT MAY BE TURNING.

3. AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DOUBT AND FEAR THAT THE ALIGNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO OUTVOTE THE LIKUD BY A SIGNIFICANT MARGIN. THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT EVEN IF THE ALIGNMENT GAINS A PLURALITY OF VOTES IT MAY BE UNABLE TO ARRANGE A COALITION AGAINST THE LIKUD. WHILE LIKUD MAY SCORE LESS THAN LABOR, IT IS LIKELY TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN CAPTURING THE LABOR COUNCILS OF KEY URBAN AREAS SUCH AS JERUSALEM, HAIFA AND POSSIBLY EVEN TEL AVIV. THIS WOULD FACILITATE THE CONTINUING EROSION OF LABOR'S SUPPORT AT THE BASE.

4. ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT OF INTERNAL CONFLICTS,

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INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
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BUCHAREST FOR VIETS

THE INCUMBENT SECRETARY GENERAL YERUHAM MESHEL  
APPEARS TO HAVE SURVIVED AS CANDIDATE FOR THE SECRETARY-  
GENERALSHIP BY ONLY A NARROW MARGIN. HE IS NOW  
PROMISING THAT AT LEAST HALF THE REPRESENTATIVES AT  
THE HISTADRUT CONVENTION, THE 501 MEMBER GENERAL  
COUNCIL, THE 167 MEMBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE  
POLICY MAKING 22 MEMBER EXECUTIVE BUREAU WILL COME  
FROM LOCAL HISTADRUT COUNCILS, AFFILIATED UNIONS,  
AND WORKS COUNCILS AND WILL BE GIVEN A MUCH BIGGER  
VOICE IN ORDER TO IMBUE THE HISTADRUT AND THE LABOR  
MOVEMENT WITH A NEW SENSE OF DEMOCRACY. THIS,  
HOWEVER, WOULD MEAN A SUBSTANTIAL EROSION OF THE  
INFLUENCE AND PATRONAGE OF THE OLD GUARD, THUS  
REDUCING ITS INCENTIVE TO BE ACTIVE IN THE CAMPAIGN--  
A FACTOR WHICH REPORTEDLY ALSO AFFECTED THE KNESSET  
CAMPAIGN.

5. A FURTHER DILEMMA FACING THE ALIGNMENT LEADERSHIP  
IS THAT ON THE ONE HAND IT MUST WARN OF THE SOCIAL  
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AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF A LIKUD VICTORY BUT ON THE

OTHER IT IS AWARE THAT PROBABLY A MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS VOTED AGAINST THE ALIGNMENT IN THE KNESSET ELECTION. THIS HAS MUTED MESHEL'S CRITICISM AND HAS LED HIM TO POINT OUT THAT HE IS READY TO COOPERATE WITH LIKUD GOVERNMENT AND IS NOT SEEKING A CONFRONTATION.

6. THE LIKUD CAMPAIGN. THE LIKUD CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT SLOW IN GETTING STARTED. APPARENTLY THE CAMPAIGN LEADERS COUNT ON THE MOMENTUM OF THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL VICTORY AND THE EVIDENT LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE INCUMBENT HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY ITS VOTING STRENGTH. ALTHOUGH, UNLIKE THE LABOR PARTY, LIKUD APPEARS TO HAVE AMPLE FUNDS AT ITS DISPOSAL, ITS SPOKESMEN SAY THAT THEY WILL CONCENTRATE THEIR PRINCIPAL EFFORTS ON THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN, WHEN THEY PLAN TO STAGE RALLIES, SPECIAL MEETINGS, AND GET-OUT-THE-VOTE CAMPAIGNS. ACCORDING TO HISTADRUT SOURCES, THE LIKUD STRATEGY APPEARS TO BE CONCENTRATING ON WINNING CONTROL OF KEY LOCAL HISTADRUT COUNCILS ON THE BASIS OF LOCAL GRIEVANCES RATHER THAN ON CAPTURING THE NATIONAL HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP, WHERE THE ALIGNMENT, DESPITE ITS MASSIVE DEFEAT ON MAY 17, CONTINUES TO ENJOY SOME ELECTORAL ADVANTAGES. ANOTHER REASON MAY BE THAT A PROLONGED MAJOR NATIONAL ELECTORAL EFFORT ON THE PART OF LIKUD COULD STRAIN DIFFERENCES IN OUTLOOK ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS BETWEEN THE LABOR WING AND THE ECONOMIC CONSERVATIVES IN THE LIKUD.

7. THE DMC CAMPAIGN: THE DMC, HAVING CONCENTRATED ITS PRINCIPAL ENERGIES ON FORMING A NEW PARTY AND MOVEMENT, HAS ALSO BEEN SLOW IN GETTING STARTED IN THE HISTADRUT CAMPAIGN. MOREOVER, ITS ROLE IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HISTADRUT WILL OF NECESSITY DEPEND ON ITS FUTURE RELATION WITH A LIKUD GOVERNMENT. SOME DMC LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THEIR GROWING DESIRE THAT THE LABOR MOVEMENT SURVIVE AS A VIABLE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO A LIKUD DOMINATED NATIONALIST-RELIGIOUS FRONT. THEY SEE THEIR MOVEMENT PLAYING A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ENSURING LABOR'S SURVIVAL AS WELL AS IN INFLUENCING ITS POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT. DMC LEADERS, LIKE MEIR AMIT, REPORTEDLY CONSIDER THE HISTADRUT ELECTION OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE FOR ENABLING THEIR PARTY TO PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THIS PROCESS AND FOR BUILDING A SOLID ORGANIZATIONAL BASE FOR THEIR MOVEMENT. WITH AN OUTRIGHT VICTORY OF THE LIKUD OVER

THE ALIGNMENT IN THE HISTADRUT ELECTION STILL CONSIDERED UNLIKELY--ALTHOUGH NOT IMPOSSIBLE--GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE ALIGNMENT HAD 58 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE LAST HISTADRUT ELECTION (1973), DMC LEADERS APPEAR TO BE WAITING TO SEE WHAT KIND OF ROLE THEY MAY BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE FOR THEMSELVES WITH A WEAKENED AND CHASTENED ALIGNMENT. THERE IS EVEN SPECULATION THAT IF THE DMC DOES NOT ENTER A LIKUD NATIONAL COALITION, THE SEPTEMBER HISTADRUT CONVENTION MAY AGREE TO OFFER THE SECRETARY GENERALSHIP TO AMIT

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6583  
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RATHER THAN TO MESHEL, THE LABOR PARTY CANDIDATE, EVEN THOUGH THE DMC VOTE IS NOT EXPECTED TO EXCEED 10-12 PERCENT. THE DMC HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED ITS OPPOSITION TO A LIKUD POLICY OF REDUCING THE HISTADRUT TO ITS BASIC TRADE UNION FUNCTIONS, AND THERE IS SOME TALK ABOUT FORMING A COALITION WITH THE ALIGNMENT, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE DMC WIL JOIN A LIKUD GOVERNMENT COALITION OR NOT.

8. THE PARTY LISTS: THE 11 PARTICIPATING PARTIES AND THE TOP FIGURES ON THEIR LISTS ARE: A) THE ALIGNMENT LIST, HEADED BY SECRETARY GENERAL YERUHAM MESHEL; FOLLOWED BY TREASURER ISRAEL KEISAR; NAVA ARAD, WHO IS ALSO ALIGNMENT CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY GENERAL OF TH HISTADRUT-AFFILIATED PIONEER WOMEN; NAFTALI BEN MOSHE OF MAPAM; YOSEPH TEKOA, THE CHANCELLOR OF BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY

AND FORMER ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVE TO THE U.N.; SHUMEL KISHELES, DIRECTOR OF ISRAEL AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES; AND AHARON AREL, THE DIRECTOR OF THE HISTADRUT ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT. THE LIST INCLUDES SOME FORTY ARAB MEMBERS, AMONG THEM MK SEIF EL ZOUABI, PLUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEVERAL CABINET MEMBERS WHO WERE PLACED ON THE LIST MORE TO LEND IT PRESTIGE THAN TO ASSURE THEM KEY POSITIONS IN THE HISTADRUT. B) THE LIKUD LIST IS HEADED BY DAVID LEVY MK, WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE MOROCCAN COMMUNITY AND FORMER CONSTRUCTION WORKER. HE IS FOLLOWED BY SHMUEL RECHTMAN, THE MAYOR OF REHEVOT, AND SEVERAL RELATIVELY UNKNOWN CANDIDATES. MOST OF THE PROMINENT LIKUD ACTIVISTS IN THE HISTADRUT, SUCH AS YORAM ARIDOR OR GUSTAV BADIAN, THE HEAD OF THE ENGINEERS' UNION, BOTH OF WHOM HAD BEEN CONTENDERS FOR THE TOP PLACE ON THE LIKUD LIST, HAVE BEEN RELEGATED TO SECONDARY POSITIONS. C) THE DMC LIST IS HEADED BY YIGAEI YADIN, FOLLOWED BY MEIR AMIT, THE FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE HISTADRUT OWNED KOOR INDUSTRIES WHO WILL PLAY THE KEY ROLE IN FORMULATING DMC POLICIES AND PROGRAMS PERTAINING TO THE HISTADRUT. ISRAEL GRANIT, A LEADER OF THE ENGINEERS' UNION, APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY PROMINENT TRADE UNIONIST ON THE DMC LIST. THE PLACEMENT OF YADIN AT THE TOP OF THE LIST PROBABLY INDICATES DMC'S INDECISIVENESS AS TO ITS FUTURE ROLE IN THE HISTADRUT. D) THE RELIGIOUS WORKERS' MOVEMENT LIST IS HEADED BY RABBI MENAHEM HACHOEN, THE CHIEF RABBI OF THE HISTADRUT AND LABOR MK. THIS GROUP HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY CLOSE TO THE ALIGNMENT AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT IT, IF THE ALIGNMENT GETS A PLURALITY OF THE VOTES. THERE ARE NO OTHER GROUPS IN HISTADRUT ASSOCIATED WITH THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORMED THEIR OWN SMALL LABOR MOVEMENT. E) THE RAKAH (COMMUNIST) DOMINATED DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR PEACE AND EQUALITY IS HEADED BY YEHOASHUA IRGA, THE RAKAH SPOKESMAN IN THE HISTADRUT, PLUS SEVERAL ARAB AND EX-BLACK PANTHER CANDIDATES. RAKAH IS EXPECTED TO ATTRACT A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF ARAB VOTES, BUT PROBABLY WILL DO LESS WELL THAN IT DID IN THE KNESSET ELECTION. F) THE BLACK PANTHERS SPONSORED THREE LISTS BUT APPLICATION FOR TWO LISTS REMAINS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PENDING SUBJECT TO VERIFICATION OF SPONSORING

SIGNATURE. G) THE SHELLI LIST IS HEADED BY YA'IR TZABAN, THE LEADER OF MOKED (A MILITANT LEFTIST FACTION) IN THE HISTADRUT FOLLOWED BY URI AVNERI, EDITOR OF THE SENSATIONALIST WEEKLY HA'OLAM HAZA. H) THE JOINT LIST OF THE INDEPENDENT LIBERAL LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE CITIZENS' RIGHTS MOVEMENT (CRM) IS HEADED BY OUTGOING ILP MK YEHUDA SHA'ARI FOLLOWED BY OUTGOING CRM KNESSET MEMBER BOAZ MOAB. I) THE OTHER APPROVED LISTS ARE THE YEMENITE ASSOCIATION, THE INDEPENDENT LIST FOR NON-PARTY ELECTONS, AND THE SOLDARITY NON-PARTY LIST.

9. COMMENT: A CURIOUS ASPECT OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN THE DIFFICULTY OF THE HISTADRUT AND ESPECIALLY THE LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP TO ENGENDER NEWSWORTHY DEVELOPMENTS AND PRESS COVERAGE IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PUBLIC INFORMED HOW THE CAMPAIGN IS PROCEEDING. THIS IS THE MORE STRANGE SINCE EVERYONE IS AWARE OF HOW MUCH THE SURVIVAL OF THE ALIGNMENT WILL DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME.

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